THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes. President of Iran H.E. Seyyed Mohammad Khatami visited India from 24 to 28 January, 2003.

(b) and (c) During the visit, wide ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest were held. The New Delhi Declaration, signed by the Prime Minister and the Iranian President, puts forth the vision of strategic partnership between India and Iran for a more stable, secure and prosperous region and for enhanced regional and global cooperation. It touches all aspects, of cooperation-bilateral economic cooperation, cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons, science and technology, information technology, education and training, reconstruction of Afghanistan, international terrorism, and other global issues.

In addition to the New Delhi Declaration a Memorandum of Understanding on the Road Map to Strategic Cooperation was also signed which sets a five-year target oriented framework for milestones towards the strategic partnership. Six other documents: Agreement on Science and Technology cooperation; MoUs on Cooperation in hydrocarbons sector, Vocational Training, and Urban Water Management; Cultural Exchange Programme (2003-2005); and Framework Agreement on operationalization of USD 200 million Indian line of credit to be implemented by Exim Bank through a group of Iranian banks, were also signed. Subsequently, Home Secretary had visited Iran from 9 to 12 February, 2003 to pursue cooperation, *inter alia,* on issues related to counter-terrorism and prevention of drug trafficking.

America's preparation for war against Iraq

250. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the developments culminating in U.S.'s preparations for war against Iraq; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government to dissuade the U.S. from taking the extreme step and for dispensing of the war-clouds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes. Government is monitoring all developments in the evolving situation with regard to Iraq.

(b) Government has discussed developments relating to Iraq with the U.S. Government on a number of occasions and has conveyed that while Iraq has to faithfully comply with the provisions of the UN Security Council resolutions, the decision on further action should be taken by the UN Security Council and, further, that all concerned should cooperate fully in finding a peaceful resolution to the issue.

Honours to NRIs

251. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of NRIs and the persons of Indian origin abroad have been honoured by Government on the 'Bharatiya Pravasi Diwas' on January 9,2003;

(b) if so, the details thereof, indicating the norms and criteria adopted for the purpose; and

(c) the recommendations of the Diaspora Committee headed by Dr. L.M. Singhvi in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) On the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the following persons of Indian origin were conferred "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman" Awards for their outstanding contribution towards fostering better understanding abroad of India and its civilization and/or for having extended their support to India's causes and concerns and for advancing her interests internationally and/or for making significant contribution or service to the Indian Diaspora:

1. Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, (Mauritius)
2. Prof. Fatima Meer, (South Africa)
3. Dr. Hari N. Harilela, (Hong Kong-China)
4. Mr. Kanaksi G. Khimji, (Oman)
5. Mr. Manilal Premchand Chandaria, (Kenya)
6. Lord Navnit Dholakia, (UK)
7. Mr. Rajat Gupta, (USA)